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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Written statement submitted by the International Federation Terre des Hommes, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[17 February 1992]

The financial situation of the United Nations

1. The United Nations is currently being entrusted with major tasks in numerous fields of vital importance for the survival, dignity and well-being of billions of men, women and children. However, in spite of this indispensable manifestation of confidence in the present or potential structures and operations of the United Nations, the successful accomplishment of these operations is being seriously threatened by a financial deficit which totalled about 1 billion dollars on 31 October 1991.

2. In the field of human rights, there is consequently a very great risk that the possibility of implementing the recommendations, resolutions and decisions of the Commission on Human Rights might also gradually diminish. The machinery of this Commission, on which countless individuals and communities pin so much hope, might therefore be brought to a standstill for lack of the financial and human resources that are essential for the achievement of real progress. In such an eventuality, the Commission would

unfortunately become nothing more than a talking-shop. If the work of this Commission, or of other United Nations bodies, deeply disturbs some types of governments or economic activities, the senior officials concerned therein might find it to their advantage to use this method to starve the programmes and work that are disturbing them.

3. The International Federation Terre des Hommes wishes to express its increasing concern at this situation and urges all Member Governments to honour the commitments that they solemnly undertook on joining the United Nations. It will not be possible to establish a new world order unless commitments, including those of a financial nature, are fully met.

4. Although there is undoubtedly a need to cut costs, this should under no circumstances be done in a manner detrimental to the structures, operations and interventions that ensure achievement of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations in regard to the protection of fundamental rights, which has been entrusted to this Commission, or in regard to peace plans, the success of which is the most ardent hope of peoples in many parts of the world.

5. Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, the former Secretary-General, drew attention to the empty coffers in his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 December last. We quote:

> "The irony of the contrast between the high expectations rightfully placed in the United Nations and the financial indigence to which it has been reduced carries a note of deep regret and perplexity ... The financial insolvency of the United Nations has confronted it with a crisis which, I must stress, is at once political and budgetary."

6. He also emphasized that the United Nations was, for all practical purposes, "unable to meet its current cash commitments, let alone to plan ahead". He went on to say that the most perplexing aspect lay in the fact that the proportion of national budgets allocated to the United Nations was minute in comparison with the military expenditures of Member States. He also presented some specific proposals to enable the United Nations to emerge from its quasi-permanent financial crisis and to find new sources of funding.

7. In 1991, only 10 States had paid their contributions on time and 48 other States had been late in meeting their obligations. All the others, including some of the most highly developed economically, had only paid an instalment towards their contribution for 1991, paid off arrears for previous years, or made no payment at all in respect of arrears or the current year. It is noteworthy that the annual budget of the United Nations is approximately equivalent to one thousandth of the amount that the world spends every year on arms: the cost of 15 F/A-18 fighter aircraft would cover that budget.

8. In conclusion, the International Federation Terre des Hommes calls upon the Commission on Human Rights to strongly recommend that every State Member of the United Nations should honour its financial obligations and pay off any arrears that it might have as soon as possible while, at the same time, pursuing the endeavours that are being made to increase the financial resources of the United Nations. These investments would inevitably bear fruit of inestimable value, in the short or the long term, for the peoples of all the Member States.